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ABSTRACT

Social practice professionals' stubborn application of the quantitative paradigm of science in social contexts has created and perpetuated the current state of affairs such as high unemployment and rampant crime. The goal is to replace the traditional quantitative beliefs and assumptions with alternatives that create and perpetuate a more desirable state of affairs. One alternative is the qualitative paradigm of science, which fosters beliefs and assumptions that empower people. As long as the traditional quantitative paradigm is the standard for professional excellence in the social sciences, practitioners will not be empowered and will experience difficulties such as the following: a sense of inadequacy and failure; disappearance of values and morality; theory-practice disjunction; proliferation of specialities; a "one best way" mentality breeding arrogance and intolerance; and dependence on externals and fear of subjectivity. The qualitative paradigm permits social practitioners to empower themselves and their clients and improve the current state of affairs by doing scientific research into their own practices. Research is a natural part of every practitioner's daily routine. The Pause Model simply builds onto that routine research and adds a few aspects of the qualitative paradigm to make the results more scientific and useful. Five components in the research process of the Pause Model are as follows: (1) the trigger; (2) goal articulation; (3) force field or gap analysis; (4) action; and (5) evaluation. The Pause Model is intended not to replace the traditional adult education program development but to supplement it. (YLB)

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# On Becoming A Reflective Practitioner

A Paper Presented at the
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

## The Current State of Affairs

Have professionals with social practices such as adult education made things better? Unemployment is up. AIDS is a plague. Drug addiction is increasing. Pollution is everywhere. Crime is rampant. And the rate of change is accelerating.

There are more people and more stake holders than ever before. As the numbers and demands increase, the traditional decision making and resource allocation patterns seem unable to respond.

The complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflicts inherent in social phenomena that were to have been eliminated by professionalism and its use of the traditional scientific approach (paradigm) remain with us.

Contradiction and ambiguity abound.

The traditional scientific value free, means-ends, analytical approach is insufficient in the contemporary social practice context.

Both ends of the gap that professional practice is expected to bridge, mastery of specialized knowledge at one end and meeting the expectations of society at the other, are changing rapidly.

Citing scientific evidence, professionals frequently deliver widely disparate and conflicting interpretations and recommendations, many of which have unanticipated consequences and unintended side effects.

Professionals are being blamed for the current state of affairs.

## What We Can do About It

Professionals can accept part of the blame and then reflect. We can critically examine our world views and the paradigms that govern both our practices and our fundamental beliefs about Life and the nature of being human.

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We can accept that our professional paradigms influence our beliefs about our relationships to each other, to Nature and to ourselves, as well as our beliefs about what is real and what is possible and therefor have contributed to the current state of affairs.

We can recognize that many of our fundamental beliefs about science and Life are so deeply held that we are unaware of them. We can accept that even though we are highly trained, many of our paradigms rest on unchallenged assumptions, uncritically accepted.

After reflecting, we can realize that most of these assumptions and beliefs are associated with only one of the paradigms of science, the traditional quantitative paradigm.

If we surface these assumptions and look at them critically, we may be able to change or replace them; and changing them, change ourselves, our practices and the current state of affairs.

## The Goal

The goal for professionals with practices in social contexts is to replace the traditional paradigm of science with a more appropriate alternative. The quantitative approach to science is not the only approach.

It is professionals' stubborn almost dogmatic application of the quantitative paradigm of science in social contexts that has created and perpetuated the current state of affairs. The goal is to replace the traditional quantitative beliefs and assumptions with alternatives that will create and perpetuate a more desirable state of affairs.

One such alternative is the qualitative paradigm of science which fosters beliefs and assumptions that empower people.

Empowering beliefs and assumptions are those which lovingly hold individual human beings accountable for their thoughts and actions. These beliefs see the power, competence and responsibility needed to think and act as residing within individual human beings, not outside of them.

Read the following descriptions of the two approaches to science: the traditional quantitative paradigm and the empowering qualitative paradigm adapted from Guba & Liconln (1981). Reflect on which sets of beliefs about truth and reality you have accepted and which are most likely to empower your practice as an adult educator.

## Understanding and Defining Reality

Which of the following sets of beliefs about reality is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm
Reality is a series of permanent entities which are fragmentable into variables. The focus is to discover variables and describe their relationships in order to predict and control behavior. Reality is best understood by highly trained professional researchers and scholars who produce theories. The variables and theories are produced in laboratory contexts without the real time pressure to perform that characterizes other practice contexts.

The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm
Reality is fluid, impermanent and transitory, not permanent or steady. The focus is on the simultaneous co-existence of multiple realities that exist like the layers of an onion, within and around one another. Each layer provides a different perspective of reality. No layer is considered more "real" or "truer" than any other and no layer has a truly independent existence outside the whole.

## The Nature of Truth

Which of the following set of beliefs about Truth is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm
The truth is permanent and unchanging. Truth comes in the form of generalizations, statements of enduring value that are essentially unchanged over time and from context to context.

The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm
Truth is relative. It does not come in the form of generalizations that are always true. Truth is contingent on context. What is true and correct for a given context or situation can only be known by studying that particular context.

## The Inquirer-Subject Relationship

Which set of beliefs about the relationship between truth-seekers and their subjects is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

### The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm

The phenomena of interest and the observer are separated, the subject and the object are split. This split called "subject-object dualism" assumes that the inquirer will have no effect on the phenomena being studied.

### The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm

The assumption is that investigators are human beings subject to all the usual human foibles and biases and that even with precautions and laboratory controls it is not possible for inquirers to keep a suitable distance between themselves and the phenomena being studied.

## Knowledge Types Used

Which set of beliefs about people's ability to tell or articulate what they know is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

### The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm

If it can't be articulated, said or explained it can't be considered knowledge.

### The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm

People know much that they can not articulate or explain. They can however demonstrate or show what they know. This can be considered a legitimate form of knowledge.

## Relationships

Which set of beliefs about the relationships between the phenomena being studied is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

### The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm

This paradigm uses the metaphor of the tug of war to understand relationships in the practice setting. In the tug of war, the single rope represents the only connection between the two factions, a stronger pull on one end overcomes the weaker pull and movement results. No question about cause and effect here.

### The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm

This paradigm uses the metaphor of a spiders web. When a fly is caught, the entire web vibrates. Only through sensing the

pattern of the web can one appreciate what is occurring. Guba & Lincoln (1981) say that "while it is useful to analyze variables, too little attention has been paid to the more complex interrelationships that can only be described as patterns. And it is dubious whether conventional modes for analyzing data can catch these often kaleidoscopic patterns (p.74)."

## Perspective

Which set of beliefs about the best way to look at the phenomena being studied is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm
This paradigm uses a reductionist perspective, trying to reduce the inquiry to a relatively small focus by imposing artificial constraints and conditions on what can be looked at and how it can be looked at. The rules are specified in advance.

The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm
This paradigm uses an expansionist stance, building outward from the point of entry using each step and each new finding to add to the knowledge base. Very few rules, conditions and artificial constraints are used. The inquirer adopts an open, exploratory and complex stance.

## Control of the Unexpected

Which set of beliefs about the best way to deal with phenomena that crop up unexpectedly is more likely to empower professionals practicing in social contexts such as adult education?

The Traditional Approach - The Quantitative Paradigm
Quantitative scientists seek to control all unexpected extraneous elements that might distract or confuse.

The Emerging Alternative - The Qualitative Paradigm
Qualitative scientists not only are uninterested in control but actually welcome and invite interference so that they can better understand real world events.

So, which of the two paradigms of science is more appropriate for a social practice such as adult education? Which would tend to empower an adult education practitioner? Which set of beliefs and assumptions will lovingly hold individual practitioners accountable for their thoughts and actions? Which set sees the power, competence and responsibility needed to think and act as residing within individual practitioners, not outside of them?

The traditional quantitative paradigm's dominance of social science, accompanied by professionals' deep almost subconscious acceptance of its assumptions as "truth" and "reality", along with its denial of legitimacy to other paradigms that might be more appropriate for the social context such as the qualitative, has meant that many social practitioners such as adult educators have been unable to practice scientifically.

The current dominance of the social sciences by the traditional quantitative paradigm has not only contributed to the state of affairs described earlier, but perpetuates it by denying social practitioners the use of a more appropriate approach to science. As long as the traditional quantitative paradigm is the standard for professional excellence in the social sciences, practitioners will not be empowered and will experience difficulties. The following are descriptions of a few of those difficulties and how the quantitative paradigm contributes to them:

## A Sense of Inadequacy and Failure

The quantitative paradigm's emphasis on single variables and upon a single reality establishes simple, "clean," two or three dimensional cause and effect relationships as the norm. By inference, this means that the complex, multiple variable relationships that are more characteristic of social practice contexts such as adult education are somehow deviant and can not be studied scientifically.

The effect of this is that when practitioners experience the surprise and confusion that is a natural part of their real world practice situations, they may also experience the negative emotions associated with mistakes and failures because they are unable to fit their complex realities into the quantitatively established professional norm.

## The Disapearance of Values and Morality

Since the quantitative paradigm views truth and reality as givens and determined by nature and since it views nature as value neutral or amoral, it therefore discounts scientific and professional efforts to understand and work with morality and human values.

These subjects are viewed as beyond the purview of legitimate, scientific inquiry, and are cut off from such inquiry and relegated to another world entirely. Social practitioners however, are not only empowered by their own morality and ethics, but are also concerned with professional ethics and codes of conduct. They are, especially those in adult education, also concerned with maximizing and extending certain values.

## The Theory Practice Disjunction

The quantitative paradigm's emphasis on subject - object dualism and generalizations gives rise to the theory practice disjunction and gives higher status to "pure" research and theory building and lower status to practice. This combination suggests a possible explanation for practitioners' frequently undisguised contempt for theory, as noted by Brookfield (1986), as well as practitioners' unwillingness to engage in scientific research, which they perceive to be of one kind only, the quantitative.

## The Proliferation of Specialties: Knowledge is Fragmented

The quantitative paradigm's emphasis on variables and the notion that reality may be fragmented with no ill effects, gives rise to the proliferation of narrow, professional specialties which in turn are based on rigid and narrow academic specialties. Most laypersons and many practicing professionals are unable to keep abreast of these narrow specialties. The failure of the specialists to explain themselves contributes to both their inability to influence the rest of society and their power in society.

## The "One Best Way" Mentality Breeds Arrogance and Intollerance

The quantitative paradigm's insistence on long lasting generalizations and on broad certainties, leaves little tolerance for the unexpected, for errors or mistakes. It gives rise to a "one best way" mentality. Contradiction, differences, discrepancies, and divergences from laboratory established norms, are viewed as deviant, rather than as a trigger for further inquiry.

## The Practitioner as Researcher

The quantitative paradigm's strong emphasis on the laboratory and "pure" research suggests that the professional and layperson are unable to generate theory and therefore are unable to understand and control their own situations. Such professionals and laypersons are therefore dependent upon the quantitative scientists. In this way, only the quantitative scientists are empowered to think and to create, while the others are made powerless and dependent.

## The Dependence on Externals and the Fear of Subjectivity

The quantitative paradigm's emphasis on objectivity, subject-object dualism and its belief that truth and reality exist independently of the observer contribute to a human dependence upon externals, which in turn gives rise to a fear of the unconscious, self doubt, a fear of subjectivity and the disparagement and discounting of most non-verbal ways of knowing such as tacit knowledge.

For the physicist or chemist, the quantitative paradigm works well. Guba & Lincoln (1981) say that it would be

> absurd to deny the self evident reality of physical objects and forces, and the reactions of chemicals in test tubes speak for themselves. The basic terms...demonstrate the utility of dividing the world into variables...and demonstrate that inquiry can converge upon these variables in a meaningful way (p. 59).

For the social-behavioral inquirer, however, Guba & Lincoln (1981) say, the qualitative assumptions about reality seem to offer a better "fit."

> Virtually all the phenomena with which the social-behavioral inquirer deals exist in the minds of people - what they take to be problems, their perceptions of one another and of the meaning of their environments.... To suggest that there is some "real" thing on which social-behavioral inquiry could converge and that could be described in terms of a few salient variables...seems quite simplistic. Social reality is, experiential, not singular, convergent, or fragmentable (p. 59).

## Using the Qualitative Paradigm

The Qualitative paradigm permits social practitioners to empower themselves, their clients and improve the current state of affairs by doing scientific research into their own practices. Such research is empowering because it will enable practitioners and their clients to take direct and immediate responsibility for their thoughts and actions, without being dependent on others outside the immediate action context for the information and feedback that they need in order to do this.

In other words, when professional adult educators become researchers into their own training practices they will be able to rapidly generate accurate, context specific data that will enable them:

1. to practice in a more client-centered, ethical way;

2. to engage in what Brookfield (1987) called critical thinking and in what Argyris & Schon (1974) described as "double loop" learning - to understand and, if needed, change, the relationships between their theories in use - what they actually do, their techniques and attitudes, and their espoused theories - what they say they want to do, their personal and professional goals and ethical aspirations;

3. to achieve what Schon (1983) calls the twin benefits of practice - competence here and now, in the present situation, and competence in future situations;

4. to push the "state-of-the-art" past its contemporary limits and to avoid what Cross (1981) described as "getting caught in yesterday's good ideas."

## The Pause Model

How are these benefits to be realized? How and when would this research be conducted? Afterall, practitioners are busy people, they don't have time to dedicate to research.

Research is a natural part of every practitioners' daily routine. Whenever something unexpected occurs, it is natural to pause and reflect on it. The Pause Model simply builds on to that routine research, adding a few aspects of the qualitative paradigm to make the results of those routine pauses a bit more scientific and therefore a bit more useful.

## The Components of the Pause Model

There are five components or five steps in the research process that practitioners would follow when using the Pause Model.

1. The "trigger" - something to start or trigger the pause. This would entail some kind of surprise, puzzle, or confusion; contradiction, discrepancy, or unanticipated, unexpected phenomenon.

2. Goal articulation - practitioners and clients identify the best possible outcomes consistent with their values. This is what Schon (1983) called articulating the "desirable future" and what Argyris & Schon (1974) called stating one's "espoused theories."

3. Force field or gap analysis - practitioners and clients identify the gap between the actual and desired states of affairs, specifying the forces driving towards or restraining the "desirable future."

4. Action - what Schon (1983) called "experiments in action" or "hypothesis testing," practitioners and clients commit resources to close the gap and achieve the goal by weakening restraining forces, strengthening driving forces, or both.

5. Evaluation - practitioners and clients determine how much of the "desirable future" the hypotheses was able to bring about and what should be done next.

An Example of the Pause Model in Action

The following is an example of how a training professional in a large bureaucratic organization might use the Pause Model:

The trainer is wondering about whether or not, or to what extent, he has had a particular impact, "X", on a learner. The "X" impact was to be one of the results of a management development training program intended to bring about a desireable future, specifically, the empowerment of the learner.

In the course of program development and implementation, the trainer took specific actions to produce "X". The practitioner pauses and critically reflects on "X" and the actions taken to achieve it hoping both were congruent and effective. But given the ambiguous, "messy" nature of the contemporary practice situation he can't be sure.

In other words, his "puzzlement" about "X" triggers his pause to critically reflect about whether "X" did in fact occur (gap analysis); if its occurrence was in fact desirable (value articulation), and finally, what particular program development and implementation related phenomena contributed to "X" (both gap analysis and value articulation).

If the goal articulation and gap analysis part of the reflective process confirm that "X" occurred and had a beneficial impact upon the learner, that it occurred without significant side effect, and that the actions taken to achieve "X" were indeed contributory and congruent, then the pause is over.

If however, the trainer finds any variation, such as no "X", or partial "X", or "X" with "Y" side effect, and/or lack of congruence or usefulness, then the pause and its experimentation would broaden and deepen.

Since, as this example shows, the pause is both an "experimental activity" to increase the trainer's understanding in the immediate situation and a "preparation" for some future situation, the pause enables practitioners to actualize what Schon (1983) says are the two, intertwined benefits of practice - achieving competence in both the immediate situation and in their overall abilities to perform, simultaneously.

## The Pause Model as an Alternative

Although it is possible, even desirable, to believe that qualitative models such as the pause to critically reflect can be full fledged, qualitative, comprehensive alternatives to the quantitative, traditional, adult education program development and implementation model, the pause model described here has not been designed to replace the traditional adult education program development and implementation model. Rather, it is intended to be an adjunct to it, to be used with it.

The qualitative pause model described in this paper is a bridging model meant to connect the two paradigms, a synthesis intended to compensate for the limitations of the quantitative approach and provide trainers with the best of both paradigms. The pause is meant to extend the adult education program development and implementation model beyond its traditional quantitative base to include the qualitative aspects as well.

The pause model is intended to facilitate "both/and" movement and avoid an either/or choice. It is designed to both surface the qualitative aspects in the midst of an adult education program developed and implemented in the traditional, quantitative way, and then synthesize both the quantitative and the qualitative to transform the program.

At this time in the history and evolution of adult education program development and implementation, and given that the quantitative model is so ingrained and dominant, a forced, "either/or" choice between a qualitative program development model or a quantitative program development model, seems wasteful and even impossible to make. This is only the beginning of Kuhn's (1970) famous "paradigm shift." Perhaps at a future point in time, an "either/or" choice may be successfuly made.

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